



MACo LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

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September 4, 2007

The Montana Association of Counties (MACo) publishes this **weekly** bulletin containing summary descriptions of bills of interest to local government officials. **Each issue lists only the bills that have been introduced during the week. Please save this message or print it for future reference.**

Copies of bills are typically sent to County Clerks and Recorders and can also be found at:

[http://laws.leg.state.mt.us/pls/laws07/LAW0200w\\$.startup](http://laws.leg.state.mt.us/pls/laws07/LAW0200w$.startup)

TO CONTACT LEGISLATORS:

Legislative Information and Message Office	444-4800
Senators	FAX (406) 444-4875
	MAIL: PO Box 200500; Helena, MT 59620-0500
Representatives	(406) 444-4825
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Many legislators have their own email addresses, which can be found at
<http://leg.mt.gov/css/sessions/60th/roster.asp?HouseID=0&SessionID=91>

Special Legislative Session Alert

Governor Schweitzer has called a Special Session of the Montana Legislature for Wednesday, September 5, 2007 @ 8:00 AM. The scope of the call is to address the costs of fire suppression. In order to move the process along, hearings on four of the bills are being held today beginning at 3:00.

The MACo Executive Committee met by conference call this morning to consider the proposed bills. They determined that MACo should neither support, nor oppose any of the bills, but should be available as informational witnesses, should county-related questions arise, or in the event amendments are proposed that would negatively impact local governments.

House Bill 1 - Callahan

Section 1 - Exempts a state of EMERGENCY due to wildfires from the present 20 day limitation that the Governor can declare a state of emergency.

Section 2 - Exempts a state of DISASTER due to wildfires from the present 30 day limitation that the Governor can declare a state of emergency. (Note: This section contains a bill drafting error in section 2, and incorrectly refers to a state of emergency, which should be disaster. An amendment will be submitted to correct this drafting error.)

Section 3 - Increases the Governor's Disaster Fund to \$25 million from the present \$16 million.

Section 4 - Appropriates \$39 million in FY-08 and \$10 million in FY-09 to DNRC to cover wildfire fighting costs. Appropriates \$3 million to the Department of Military Affairs for wildfire and disaster recovery efforts. Requires that \$16 million of the \$42 million in FY-08 be treated as recovery of money already spent for wildfire suppression costs.

Link to HB 1: <http://data.opi.mt.gov/bills/specsess/0907/billpdf/HB0001.pdf> This bill is scheduled to be heard by a joint meeting of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance and Claims committees at 3:00 on TODAY (the day before the special session convenes).

House Bill 2 - Ripley

Section 1 - Identical language to Section 4 of HB 1.

Link to HB 2: <http://data.opi.mt.gov/bills/specsess/0907/billpdf/HB0002.pdf> It is also scheduled to be heard by a joint meeting of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance and Claims committees at 3:00 today.

House Bill 3 – Ripley

Section 1 - Establishes a fund for fire fighting costs and requires reimbursements from the federal government to be placed into the special account. The account is to the credit of DNRC (NOT the Governor). It also appropriates an amount sufficient to bring the balance in the fund to \$25 million at the beginning of a fiscal year. The money in this fund may ONLY be used for fire suppression costs.

Section 2 - Exempts any recovery of fire suppression costs that goes into the fund established in Section 1 from the statute allowing the Governor to accept grants and such on behalf of the state and determine its use subject to Subsection 1 which is for any disaster.

Section 3 - Under current law, when there is a recovery of federal money it is placed into the Governor's disaster fund to restore appropriation authority. This section exempts recoveries under Section 1 from this provision.

Section 4 - Amends the statutory appropriation section of current law to include money received under the provisions of Section 1 of the bill.

Section 5 – Appropriates \$25 million from the General Fund into the Fund Suppression Account established in Section 1.

Link to HB 3: <http://data.opi.mt.gov/bills/specsess/0907/billpdf/HB0003.pdf> It is also scheduled to be heard by a joint meeting of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance and Claims committees at 3:00 today.

House Bill 4 – Sinrud

Section 1 - This is the feed bill and appropriates \$167,000 to pay for the special session. This is enough for about three days just in case the special session runs over the planned one day. Anyone coming for the session should plan to pack their toothbrush because you may not get home Wednesday night!

Link to HB 4: <http://data.opi.mt.gov/bills/specsess/0907/billpdf/HB0004.pdf> It is scheduled to be heard at 4:00 today by the joint committee.

Senate Bill 1 – Wanzenried

Section 1 - This is the same language as in Section 1 of HB 1 and appears to be a back-up bill in case HB 1 does not progress through the process.

Link to SB 1: <http://data.opi.mt.gov/bills/specsess/0907/billhtml/SB0001.htm>

LC0005 – Requested by Elliott

There is no draft language available and is probably a back-up bill title that could be used for drafting another bill.